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SUBJECT: PRT WASIT MEETS WITH SADRIST AL KUT MAYOR

Classified By: Acting Team Leader Rob Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

12. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) On May 19, PRT met with al Kut Mayor Sayyid Sattar Jabar Nour at al Kut City Hall. Sattar, a Sadrist Trend official with strong ties to Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM), has refused to meet with any CF representative for several years but agreed to the meeting in order to discuss the recent displacement of street vendors caused by a large PRT project being constructed in central al Kut. After a brief discussion about the vendors, Sattar, although visibly uncomfortable, was willing to briefly discuss elections ("we'll win over half the seats for the Provincial Council"); rival political movements ("most have been living in Iran-they don't know the suffering of the people"); and foreign influence in Iraq ("we are forced to fight to prevent the influence of Saudi Arabia and Iran"). Sattar also asked for PRT help addressing an IDP housing problem, leaving the door open for a second meeting. End Summary.

13. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) There is extensive military HUMINT reporting that Sattar is one of the senior JAM leaders in al Kut and, as such, is involved in all manner of illegal, anti-government and anti-CF activity. Throughout the meeting, Sattar was tense but cordial. He engaged in no superfluous conversation, answering all questions and never taking the accusatory or aggressive tone as one might expect from a Muqtada partisan unused to dealing with CF representatives. Sattar is in his early 40s, has a solid build on a 5'10" frame and emanates "street credibility" in a manner not entirely unlike a Soprano-like family crew captain.

14. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Sattar praised the ESF-funded Fish and Meat Market that is currently being constructed in central al Kut, but asked for PRT assistance with the estimated 500-600 street vendors who will be temporarily displaced by the construction. He said the al Kut city council had studied the issue and sent a report to the Director of Municipalities in late April but had not received a response. IPAQ agreed to address the issue with the PRT's program manager and appropriate government contacts. (Note: PPM had been working the issue with relevant Wasit Directors General prior to the meeting and has identified several viable options to accommodate the displaced vendors. End Note.)

15. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) After the discussion about the street vendors, Sattar again requested PRT help addressing a constituent issue. The ISF has begun reclaiming government buildings in al Kut, forcing out the squatters who had been inhabiting them. Sattar said there were approximately 3,000 - 4,000 people, mainly IDPs from other provinces, who would be evicted and asked for help providing housing to the affected group. (Note: IPAQ agreed to investigate the issue and discuss with the program manager and will use the request as the basis for setting up the next meeting. End Note.)

16. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) When asked about the upcoming

Provincial elections, Sattar said the Sadrism Trend would face "clear pressure from the Government and the Marja'iyah" but the people want leaders who have "spent their days in Iraq." He predicted the Sadrism Trend would pick up over half of the seats in the Provincial Council. Sattar said he expects to run again for his position; he would prefer to leave the job but did not expect Sadrism Trend leadership to allow it.

17. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Referring to members of the national government who spent time in Iran and Europe, Sattar complained that "Americans are connected to bad people who give bad advice"; he asserted his opposition to "Iranian and Saudi influence" in southern Iraq; and declared that "we are forced to fight." He acknowledged, but showed no reaction to IPAO's statements that CF recognizes the legitimacy of the Sadrism movement but rejects violence and will continue to pursue criminals who attack Iraqis and CF. At the end of the meeting, however, Sattar stated twice that "under different circumstances" he would like to discuss other, more pleasant topics and agreed to meet again.

18. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Comment: The Mayor is no philosopher, but rather a populist, "salt of the earth" personality who talked directly about his thoughts; PRT's local political assistant attributed Sattar's anxious manner as much to meeting with the suit-and-tie crowd as to any unease about meeting with Americans. Due to his position in the organization (sensitive reporting indicates the Al Kut Brigade Commander reports to Sattar) and his apparent commitment to the Sadrism Trend cause, we assess that he is unlikely to divulge information on JAM operations or

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personnel, although he may eventually be willing to provide insight into and details on Iranian influence in al Kut. End Comment.  
CROCKER